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AUTHOR Hruska, Jack
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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter states that the problem of school crime is not a school problem, but a cultural problem manifesting itself in schools. The cultural shifts of the last generation are creating adolescent needs that schools were never organized to deal with, and, therefore, schools lack the basic structural resources to satisfy these new needs. Schools were developed in an era when adolescents were an economic asset in the home, on the farm, and in the community. As America moved from a rural, labor-intensive community to a suburban, capital-intensive society, the activity-rich life of adolescents disappeared. It is necessary to recognize that school is not a satisfactory solution in the development of all adolescents, and neither is the historical fallback position of letting them drop out of school to enter full-time employment. Rather, the challenge to society is to create new roles for adolescents--to restructure societal institutions so that adolescents have meaningful tasks, meaningful relationships with adults, and meaningful opportunities for being creative, being productive, and being useful. (Author/MLF)

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OBSOLESCENCE OF ADOLESCENCE

Jack Kruska

School of Education, University of Massachusetts

A paper from
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ABSTRACT

The problem of school crime is not a school problem; it is a cultural problem manifesting itself in schools. The cultural shifts of the last generation are creating adolescent needs that schools were never organized to deal with, and, therefore, schools lack the basic structural resources to satisfy these new needs. That is, schools were developed in an era when adolescents were an economic asset in the home, on the farm, in the community. The natural process of growing up in rural America provided opportunities for work, productivity, responsibility, being with adults, and discovering things that one was good at. Schools complemented this activity-rich life with an opportunity to develop cognitive skills unavailable from the community. As America moved from a rural, labor-intensive community to a suburban, capital-intensive society, the activity-rich life of adolescents disappeared. They became economic liabilities, a surplus in the home and on the job market, and the societal response was to lengthen the period of formal schooling. However, the basic structure of the school--abstract lessons, courses, subjects focusing on cognitive development--remained the same. The cumulative effects of those developments have been the creation of prolonged adolescents who attend secondary schools beseiged with control problems and of an adolescent life-style devoid of the experiences generally thought of as needed to help young people become more confident of themselves, more socially aware, more independent, and more productive.

What is needed is not pass/fail, flexible schedules, open spaces, language labs. These may be humanizing improvements, but in the main these "innovations" merely temper the frustrations schools provoke. The more promising road is to recognize that schooling is not a satisfactory solution in the development of all adolescents, and neither is the historical fallback position of letting them drop out of school to enter full-time employment on the farm, in the factory, or in the general store. Rather, the challenge to our society, and not just to our schools, is to create new roles for adolescents--to restructure our societal institutions so that adolescents have meaningful tasks, meaningful relationships with adults, and meaningful opportunities for being creative, being productive, being useful. Until those roles are established, our schools and our society will continue to be the target of adolescent frustration, and young adults will continue to wreck havoc on that society and on themselves.

Introduction

Adolescents are expendable. Their activities are mostly self-indulgent. They go to school, hang out on street corners, party, break laws, smoke marijuana, drink, take part-time jobs, play sports, pop pills, and listen to music. They partake in those activities not because they find them particularly fulfilling, but because there are few alternatives.

Technology and urbanization have significantly changed twentieth-century America, and one of the more dramatic changes has been the impact on youth. Our society no longer needs them. Their productive energies have been replaced in the home by processed food and natural gas, and in the labor market by machines, computers, and adults. And, because social relationships are heavily influenced by our production system, the social relationships of young people are severely circumscribed.

When young people are reaching physical and sexual maturity, searching arduously and painfully for some sense of who they are, and growing into moral and intellectual maturity, they have intense needs for meaningful social and work activity to help them clarify their lives. Yet, during this 13- to 19-year-old period we have confined their role to schooling, which is essentially a preparation for taking an active part in society at some future time. The

role of student is meaningful only to some, perhaps a minority; to the rest, it is unbearably limiting and frustrating. Those who are unable to gain identity and meaning as students feel themselves cut off, boxed in, useless, outcasts, alienated. Unable to see themselves as students preparing for a productive future, they feel obsolete--their skills, feelings, creativity, energy, ideals, imagination, and impulses have no apparent value to a society that provides schooling as the only viable role for adolescents.

These young people, unable to be assimilated into the society as properly progressing students, having no other legitimate roles, both turn against the society of which they are not a part and turn against themselves. Their frequent response is to wreak havoc on that society, especially on those institutions which most personally reject them. Rebellion takes many forms: some steal cars, break windows, and tear up toilets; others attack teachers, fellow students, and passersby. They also attack their own bodies and egos with alcohol, drugs, self-hate, apathy, and suicide.

Cultural Shifts

The problem of school crime is not so much a problem of schools as it is the result of cultural changes showing up in schools. Cultural changes in the family, work environments, and the community have eroded adolescents'

participation in these developmentally important institutions.

Families and Communities

As we gradually moved from extended families to nuclear families, we have systematically reduced the number of people with whom adolescents interact in a close, loving, concerned way. Not only are there fewer grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings around, but the time and functions available are less likely to provide opportunity for intimate and productive involvement. Family life is fragmented: parents work away from the home, both parents work, and there are more single-parent families. In the home, technology and mass production have reduced the time and labor needed to clean, mend, make, haul, fix, share, chop, milk, shear, gather, plant, feed, and build, significantly reducing the need for adolescent energies in the home--and, in the process, decreasing functional interactions among family members.

As the family slowly began to lose its impact on young adults, so did the local community. It is easy to romanticize the small towns of years ago. Evidence abounds that the "community spirit" we have presumably lost today was accompanied by ignorance, boredom, meanness, corruption, and insensitivity. But, whatever their vices, those smaller,

rural communities were more accessible to the adolescents than are our more urbanized, specialized, compartmentalized, physically segregated communities of today. In earlier times adolescent labor was needed on the farm, in the stable, in the home, in the stores. Young people moved more readily from totally dependent childhood to significant roles in the community. At ages 14 and 15, young boys were interacting with men, emulating their ways, learning the harsh discipline of the struggle for survival. Young girls were learning the ways of the home, the farm, and especially the kitchen. They stood side-by-side with the older women of the household: everyone was expected to contribute to the productivity of the family. In short, the adolescent had both feet planted firmly in the activities of the community. When the community experiences were bad the adolescents, like the rest, suffered the consequences. And when the community life was good they shared the bounty. In either case their identities were inextricably tied to the daily life of the community.

Not so today. Communities are no longer characterized by small farms, small businesses, people who know each other, who suffer together, fight together, hate together, and love together. Rather, they are places of systematic segregation: the young in elementary schools, the old in nursing homes, the factory workers in plants, the families in the residential area, the doctors and dentists in the

medical centers, the shopkeepers in the mall, the poor in the depressed area, and the adolescents in the secondary schools. Physically, each place is set apart and generally inaccessible to anyone other than the employees and clients. In addition to this separation, the average American family moves once every five years, further weakening the glue that makes a community a familiar and available place.

The Work Setting

It is more than coincidence that compulsory school laws emerged during times of labor surplus. While it is hard to fault the legislation that freed children from the mines and mills, compulsory schooling, coupled with other changes in the work environment, has systematically excluded children and adolescents from close involvement in work. And work, to the degree it is productive and meaningful, is a basic source of identity and social interaction.

In addition to physically removing children and adolescents from the lathe and the plow, we have segregated them from most work settings. Specialization, big business, suburbs, large schools set apart from the community, commuting, industrial parks, shopping malls, and similar forms of segmentation have virtually removed adolescents from work environments. Thus, they not only lost whatever

identity and self-esteem that productive work provides, but they also lost the opportunity for close association with the farmer, the craftsperson, the factory worker, and the doctor.

The case should not be overstated. Statistics show that many high school youth, perhaps as many as half, hold part-time jobs. But, while these jobs provide spending money and some use of energy, we cannot expect the part-time work available to school-attending youngsters to provide the growth-producing experiences they desperately need. Even jobs held by adults are becoming characterized by boredom, routine, top-down authority, repetition, and lack of opportunities for creativity and self-assertion (Work in America, 1972). The part-time jobs available to the young--fast-food server, salesclerk, stock-person, delivery person, typist--are even more devoid of potential human fulfillment. To the extent that work has been the source of identity, self-esteem, and a connection to the larger community for adolescents, our society is rapidly eliminating that potential.

A steady consequence of the evolution of all these institutions--family, work setting, community--is the erosion of the adolescent role. In each case, the opportunities to do purposeful work, to interact closely with adults, and to gain and test competencies have been reduced. Systematically, our culture has delayed the time at which these opportunities

become available to young people. There are few clear-cut lines between boyhood and manhood, girlhood and womanhood. In our diffuse, unceremonial, individualized, do-it-yourself, urban-industrial society, few expectations are spelled out for young people.

These cultural barriers to adolescent development are even more of a problem today because adolescents are reaching sexual maturity earlier. Also, the liberalization of sexuality and the sexual stimulation provided by the media add fuel to already passionate, fearful, confused, energetic, and ever-changing personalities.

The result of all this has been the creation of a period of life that is hopelessly explosive. Young people emerging from puberty in this country have been better fed, vaccinated, vitamined, clothed, stimulated, aroused, and energized than the young anywhere else--and simultaneously we have drastically reduced the roles that might give meaning to all that preparation. Instead, we send them to secondary schools.

The Limitations of Secondary Schooling

Responsibility for virtually all aspects of adolescent development has shifted from family, work, and community institutions to the secondary school. In 1900, 6 percent of the eligible youth graduated from high school; today,

the figure is over 90 percent. As the amount of time that we keep adolescents in school increases, so do our expectations. Whereas secondary schools were once concerned primarily with the three Rs, they are now being asked to take on the responsibilities and tasks that were formerly done in the family, in the community, and on the job. Present-day schools are constantly responding to such movements as Humanistic Education, Special Education, Sex Education, Career Education, Environmental Education, Open Education, Vocational Education, Consumer Education, Health Education, Value Clarification, all of which compete for attention with the perennial Back to the Basics movement. It has become clear that secondary schools cannot fulfill these multiple and frequently contradictory expectations.

Schools Have Been Pushed Beyond Their Psychological Limits

The passivity of secondary education runs counter to the activity needs of adolescents. Anyone familiar with junior and senior high schools knows the incredible amount of energy needed just to control the physicality of the students. Yet, as if repressing the physical movement of students weren't enough of a task, secondary schools must also repress their psychological tendencies. An adolescent tends to live completely in the present, overwhelmed with questions of Who am I? and What am I to become?, but the secondary school curriculum focuses almost exclusively on preparing young people for the future. Adolescents feel a need to experiment with new ways

of interacting with their environment, and to spend endless hours talking about that interaction, but the process of schooling systematically removes them from interacting with their environment. Rather than providing experiences for young people, the curriculum is a process of transmitting society's accumulated experiences. We do not ask students to rediscover principles and theories or to undergo all the possible human experiences of love, hate, death, anxiety, tragedy, suicide, envy, etc. Rather,we abstract these experiences into formulas, lab experiments, movies, short stories, lectures, readings, maps, and so forth. We then organize these abstracted experiences into lessons and courses, which become a curriculum. The students are to "move through" the courses and "cover" the material so that they can, somehow, "learn" the material in order to lead more rational, meaningful, and useful lives. That, simplistically,is the theory benind secondary school curricula.

The theory has a fatal flaw, and the suffocating boredom and resultant disillusionment with secondary education have much to do with the impact of that flaw. The Achilles heel of secondary curricula structure is that it is a rational and logical organization of knowledge, but we have pushed it far beyond its psychological limitations. That rational breakdown of the world into compartmentalized disciplines and the refinement of those disciplines into

subunits, which are then broken apart into micro-units, leave the motivation to "learn" entirely to the student. And the reality is that only a portion of adolescents can identify with that academic approach to the world. We aren't entirely certain why some students relate to that curriculum, but socioeconomic-status data suggest that it has to do with their perceptions of themselves and their future careers. To the extent that students plan to go to college and pursue the sort of career that follows academic training, and to the extent that their upbringing prepared them to tolerate the delayed gratification required by prolonged study, they can successfully negotiate an academic curriculum. However, the proportion of students who can do so is limited both by the social stratification of our society and by the reward structure of the schools themselves. The social stratification suggests that less than half of our students will identify with the kinds of pursuits requiring academic preparation. And the grading and ranking procedures within the schools allow only about half of the students to feel successful as academic students: if we did not have Cs, Ds, and Fs, As and Bs would be meaningless. And, tragically, when studenthood is the only sanctioned role, being a C student is to be a C person.

The Preparation Trap

At the heart of the problem of the growing disillusionment with and disintegration of our secondary schools lies the notion that adolescence is to be given over to preparation for later life. Having no economic or social need for adolescents, we have, in effect, decided to use the time of adolescence for academic or vocational preparation.[1]

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[1] Some educators, reacting to the shortcomings of an academic education, have come down hard in favor of vocational education. In so doing they frequently narrow the notion of "preparation for life" to preparation for a job. However, I believe this posture flies in the face of certain realities: the average person will change jobs five times in his or her lifetime, occupational skills are quickly outdated, few teenagers are able rationally to select an occupation, and on-the-job training may be the most efficient occupational training for most jobs. (And I am at one with Robert Hutchins, who argues that the job of the schools is so big that they should do nothing that another institution can do as well.) Traditional vocational education programs are also subject to the criticisms that they (1) are providing industrial training at public expense, (2) actually terminate a child's search for his vocation and dead-end him into a slot, and (3) psychologically condition him to accept himself as one type of human being, different from those who find enjoyment in thinking, beauty, argument, books, surprise, uncertainty, poetry, or whatever.

This is not to argue that kids shouldn't learn vocational skills in school. I believe, in fact, they should have opportunities to learn more. What they learn, and how well they learn it, however, should be a function of their own growth needs. The ability to do something well may provide the security necessary for the student to seek further growth. However, to look to industry instead of to college entrance requirements for the guidelines for educational decisions is to err as far in one direction as in the other. Thus, both the academicians and the vocationalists have been overcome with the frustrations that are part and parcel of thinking seriously about the ends of education. They have taken opposite ways out, but neither route, I believe, holds much promise.

This was not a thoughtful, conscious decision grounded in adolescent psychology; rather, it was merely the extension of this country's conventional wisdom which says that education is a good thing--the more of it the better--and that more education is equated with more schooling.

That idea that these formative years should or could be given over to preparation for later life is fraught with psychological difficulties. A cursory examination of adolescents would make any disinterested observer skeptical as to whether such a passionate and volatile period of growth could be contained by years of preparation for some future tasks.

As for the assumption that formal schooling does constitute such preparation, John Dewey (1938/1967) wrote:

> Now "preparation" is a treacherous idea. In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that the mere acquisition of a certain amount of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., which is taught and studied because it may be useful at some time in the future, has this effect, and it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired. (p. 47)

The treacherousness of the idea of "preparation"can be seen in current statistics on adolescent behavior--on suicide,

alcoholism, drug use, crime, violence, and similar responses that indicate a sense of loss, of alienation, of self-hate.

Looking back, it was predictable. Schools were most successful when they did not have to suceed--when there were alternatives to education (the farm, the factory, the apprenticeship), when there were other avenues to social and economic advancement, and when a nonschooling lifestyle was viable for an adolescent. When the "preparation" curriculum of 1900 or 1940 became too stultifying or pyschologically unbearable for a youngster, he or she simply left the school and joined the community in another role. Today, in the almost total absence of alternative community roles, the young people who would have left school in any former era are still there. They remain in school under protest, lacking meaningful options, and they expend much of their energy maintaining a youth culture aimed at meeting some of the psychological needs so totally unavailable to them in the adult culture. This youth culture, mostly unassisted by enlightened and compassionate adults, and thoroughly exploited by the mass media, has become a most powerful influence on adolescents.

In short, adolescents' behavior is a product of their being systematically isolated from the community, being subjected to a "preparation" schooling that provides limited emotional rewards with high emotional costs, and participating

in a youth culture that, at best, is superficial. In other words, the evolution of an economic and social system with no meaningful roles for adolescents has rendered them obsolete. They have been disinherited. And their behavior patterns--loss of ego strength, cynicism, skepticism, irresponsibility, apathy, violence to themselves and others--reflect the behavior patterns of disinherited peoples in all places at all times.

The Primacy of Identity

The youth culture is characterized by contradictions: the idealism and the cynicism, the rejection of authority and the emulation of idols, the striving for individualism and the rigid loyalty to peers, the abundance of energy in some situations and the lethargy and apathy in others. Exuberant gaiety, laughter, and euphoria make place for depressive gloom and melancholy. It is this writer's view that much of that behavior can be attributed to the loss of identity that has accompanied the erosion of meaningful adolescent roles. Not knowing who they are or who they aren't or who they are becoming, adolescents exhibit seemingly incongruous behavior in search of clarity and meaning. They also lash out in frustration and anger, frequently randomly, at the society which has disowned them. Surely they are not living up to our expectations and, in that sense, they are disappointing us. But, if we assume that young

people would rather, given the chance, be a part of the dominant culture, be economically and socially productive, be accepted and respected by their neighbors, be creative rather than destructive, and be in sound mental and physical health, then we have to assume that somehow we have blocked their opportunities to choose those behaviors. Erik Erikson (Evans, 1967) has raised that specter:

> For the longest time we have failed to see that the delinquent adolescent, too, is looking for the chance to conform to some subculture, to be loyal to some leader, and to display and develop some kind of fidelity. We cannot treat them as the police and courts often do, as "naturally" inferior people with exclusively negative values. There are very few really bad people in the world, and I think they can be found rather among those who misuse youth. Those who become delinquent have simply been sidetracked because we failed them, and if we fail to recognize this fact, we lose them. (pp. 39-40)

And we have failed them. Unable to find meaningful positive identities, many choose negative ones that, whatever their inconveniences, have the virtues of clarity and certainty.

Paul Goodman was one of the first scholars to challenge the circumscribed lifestyle we offer to adolescents. His blistering survey of the relationship between society and youth (Goodman, 1956) stresses the lack of basic community adolescent roles:

> This brings me to another proposition about growing up and perhaps the main theme of this book. Growth, like any ongoing function, requires adequate objects in the environment to meet the needs and capacities of the growing child, boy, youth, and young man, until he can better choose and make his own environment. It is not a "psychological" question of poor influences and bad attitudes, but an objective question of real opportunities for worthwhile experience. It makes no difference whether the growth is normal or distorted, only real objects will finish the experience. (Even in the psychotherapy of adults one finds that many a stubborn symptom vanishes if there is a real change in the vocational and sexual opportunities, so that the symptom is no longer needed.) It is here that the theory of belonging and socializing breaks down miserably. For it can be shown--I intend to show--that with all the harmonious belonging and all the tidying up of background conditions that you please, our abundant society is at present simply deficient in many of the most elementary objective opportunities and whorth-while goals that could make growing up possible. It is lacking in enough man's work...It is lacking in the opportunity to be useful. It thwarts aptitude and creates stupidity. (p. 12)

Unable to find meaningful and productive activities in which to test their competencies, many young people exhibit bizarre behavior. They crave mastery, excitement, challenge, passion, intimacy, involvement, and a sense of belonging. The legitimate routes to satisfy these needs are narrow--namely becoming a good student in a family and community that values extended education. Those who are unable or unwilling to walk that path must either thwart their enormous appetites and "cool out" their disruptive

vitality or find other, usually socially unacceptable, outlets.

Thus, the "problem" of youth is generally now a problem that resides in the educational system. Admittedly, the schools are the target of ever-increasing amounts of crime and vandalism, but that is because the young spend inordinate amounts of time there, and the schools' inability to meet their needs generates bitter anger and resentment. As desparately as these schools are in need of democratization, it is silly to think that any internal reforms will solve the fundamental cultural problem of our disinherited young. In-school reforms merely temper the frustrations brought about by the cultural changes that culiminated in a "preparation" role for young people. The only real solution lies in generating significant roles other than schooling for our adolescents.

The Need for Options Other Than School or Jobs

Perhaps the single greatest impediment to our thinking about altering the lifestyles of adolescents is that we impose upon ourselves parameters that exclude potential solutions. We formulate the problem as if it were one of finding the proper relationship between school and work, or preparation for work. Young adults are expected to go to school either to prepare for advanced schooling or to prepare for a job. Thus, secondary education has been polarized into

academic education and vocational education, which disguises the fact that the academic program is blatantly vocational in that it paves the way for higher education which historically has led to a better job.

In spite of this tenaciously held idea that the only acceptable options for young adults are schooling or a job, there is mounting evidence that these alternatives are no longer viable. Must we once again parade the statistics on juvenile drug use, alcoholism, suicide, crime, vandalism, and physical assault to convince ourselves that mandatory secondary education isn't working? All five major commissioned studies of the high schools in the past seven years have concluded that the institution is desperately in need of major reform, and is, in fact, on the verge of collapse ("American Youth," 1972; Coleman et al., 1974; "The Emerging Reform Movement," 1974; "National Panel," 1974; "The Reform of Secondary Education," 1973).

As for the other alternative, a job, the increasing alienation of American workers can be seen in wildcat strikes, drug use, alcoholism, corporate dropouts, worker turnover and absenteeism, breakdowns in quality control, early retirement, and mental disorders. Are there still those among us who eat in fast-food restuarants, shop in the malls, buy groceries in the supermarkets, buy gas at the gas stations, and stay at the motel chains who sincerely believe that holding a job in one of these places could in some way meet the developmental needs of young adults?

Many argue that school or a part-time job is inadequate in itself, but claim that the solution lies in some combination of the two. But it strikes me as a quaint notion that integrating two factors, each lacking any merit in itself, will somehow produce something worthwhile.

My disenchantment with jobs as suitable development environments for adolescents is not to assert that jobs are meaningless or that they needn't be done. After all, we do need clean dishes, sandwiches, and light bulbs. But, until the work shortage problem has been resolved, and unless it is resolved by the unlikely total restructuring of jobs, there is little possibility of significantly enhancing the educational potential of existing jobs.

The conclusion that seems most defensible at this time is that we should jettison the entrenched belief that the only setting available for young adolescents is schooling, jobs, or some combination thereof.

The Concept of Work--Not Jobs--As a Developmental Process

To create meaningful work roles for adolescents, we must use the distinction between work and labor; most present-day jobs are labor. Since Taylor's time and motion studies fifty years ago, our economic practice has been to make work structures a function of, and subordinate to, productivity of material goods. Work has been subdivided into isolated repetitive functions, easily learned and not requiring much intelligence or creativity. This excessive rationalization

of production has transformed work into labor. The cumulative result has been a splendid capability for mass-producing cheap products of unlimited variety, while at the same time drastically reducing the proportion of the population that identified itself as farmers, craftsmen, mechanics, entreprenuers, and self-employed. Another way of saying it is that we eliminated careers and created jobs.

Work is a broader and denser term than job. Purposeful work requires the exercise of insight, craft, intelligence, judgment, and style. It means an activity which one does to accomplish some goal and for the feeling of worth or belongingness or success or wholeness. It means that the worker has some control over working conditions and quality, and that he or she has a desire to engage in that activity. When work is done purely for money, we call it labor, or having a job. Most of the activities that people do to earn money are in fact jobs, and not work.

Paul Goodman (1956) urges the establishment of meaningful work, arguing that our society is "lacking in enough man's work," and "there get to be fewer jobs that are necessary or unquestionably useful; that require energy and draw on some of one's best capacities; and that can be done keeping one's honor and dignity." And further,

> Right proportion requires reversing the goal in vocational guidance, from fitting the man to the machine and chopping him down to fit, to finding the opportunity in the economy that brings out the man and if you can't find such an opportunity, make it. This involves encouraging new small enterprises and unblocking and perhaps underwriting invention.

> Again, if at the present production is inhuman and stupid, it is that too few minds are put to it: this can be remedied by giving the workman more voice in production and the kind of training to make that voice wise. (p. 232)

Abraham Maslow (1965), the psychologist who developed the hierarchy of needs concept, also stressed the importance of a work role to human fulfillment:

> This business of self-actualization via a commitment to an important job and to worthwhile work could also be said, then, to be the path of human happiness (by contrast with the direct attack or the direct search for happiness--happiness is an epiphenomenon, a by-product, something not to be sought directly but an indirect reward for virtue). The other way--of seeking for personal salvation--just doesn't work for anybody I have ever seen--that is the introspection, the full-time-in-a-cave all by one's self some place. This may work for people in India and Japan--I won't deny that--but I have never seen it work for anybody in all my experience in the United States. The only happy people I know are the ones who are working well at something they consider important. (p. 6)

Edgar Friedenberg (1959) argued for providing more opportunities for the development of competencies:

> But respect for competence in oneself and others is crucial in adolescence, for it is crucial to self-definition. In a world as empirical as ours, a youngster who does not know what he is good at will not be sure what he is good for, he must know what he can do in order to know who he is. (p. 40)

> School ought to be a place where you can not only learn to be a scholar, a fighter, a lover, a repairman, a writer, or a scientist, but learn that you are good at it, and in which your awareness and pride in being good at it becomes a part of your sense of being you. (p. 218)

While Friedenberg, writing in 1959, does not deal with the issues of jobs and work, he concludes his book with the plea for more attention to competencies. I strongly suspect that the self-definition he sought in competencies is more likely to be found in work than in jobs.

In summary, neither schooling nor the jobs available to young people will provide the environments needed for adolescent development. The better solution resides in the creation of work opportunities, using the term work in its fuller sense. Many, maybe most, of these work opportunities will not be available in the form of paid jobs in the private sector. That kind of work, where it once existed, has been reduced to jobs.

Transitional Activities

Any attempt precisely to identify the developmental needs of a given group involves assumptions about human nature and how people ought to live--a logically risky business. Therefore, it is with much humility that I suggest the following criteria as a guide for the kind of work opportunities we need to create for our adolescents.

To end the obsolescence of adolescents and reintegrate them into growth-producing experiences in our communities, we need to develop activities that will enable adolescents:[2]

(1) To manage their own affairs effectively (e.g., time utilization, finances, learning environments). Through a combination of affluence, full-time schooling, and isolation from the community, we have tended to reduce adolescent self-discipline and to protect young people from the consequences of their decisions. We need to provide experiences in which self-management can be developed in settings where failing is not seriously harmful.

(2) To interact with people of different ages. A 16-year-old has a lot to teach a 7-year-old and a lot to learn from a 70-year-old, and the reverse is also true.

(3) To have others dependent on their actions. We maintain our young in a state of dependency long after they feel the need gradually to establish joint and then sole responsibility for their actions.

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[2]For many of these ideas I am indebted to the Panel on Youth of the Presidents' Science Advisory Committee, chaired by James S. Coleman. Their report, Youth: Transition to Adulthood, University of Chicago Press, 1974, proposed the "establishment of alternative environments for the transition to adulthood." While I believe they relied too much on the private sector for their solutions, I believe the report is a superb statement of the problem.

(4) To have interdependent activities directed toward collective goals. The strong needs to belong, to share, and to identify with get short shift in a society grounded in individualism and competitiveness.

(5) To be creative in ways that culminate in finished products. People in all times in all cultures have drawn, carved, sculpted, sewn, painted, built, and used their hands and imaginations in an inexhaustible number of self-expressive ways. But our culture encourages standardization, consumerism, and passivity, and we must actively pursue creativity, for "those who cannot create, must destroy."

(6) To gain competencies (without necessarily rooting them in career preparation). No scholar of adolescent behavior wants to reduce identity to simply what one can do, but neither do any ignore the necessity of being good at something--whether that be mathematics, gardening, sewing, cooking, plumbing, radio repair, dancing, or whatever. For far too long we have squandered our youth by validating only those competencies that lead to a job or further success in school.

(7) To interact actively with other cultures, other races, other lifestyles. Few who have traveled, lived abroad, or shared communally with people different from themselves can deny the broadening effect of those experiences. Perhaps the process of finding out who one is is intertwined with finding out who one isn't.

(8) To give unselfishly of one's time, love, energies. One of the delightful paradoxes of adolescents is their apparent preoccupation with self and simultaneous predisposition to make heroic sacrifices for others. The latter tendency can easily be frustrated in a society where competitive schooling and profit seeking are in vogue. We need to identify the situations where the young can openly and trustfully give of themselves.

Common Characteristics

There are several characteristics that these eight objectives have in common.

First, while they are related to cognitive knowledge, they are not grounded in the accumulation of more information or cognitive skills. It has been my position that the "problem" of adolescence lies in adolescents' lack of social and economic usefulness, and not in their lack of the kind of knowledge we teach in school.

Secondly, each objective has a self-knowledge component. By involvement with projects, others, and materials, people find out what they can do and how others respond to them, thereby gaining self-insight.

Thirdly, these objectives are, in the main, being made available to the children of the well-to-do. For generations, affluent parents have provided music and dance lessons, trips

abroad, summer camps, backpacking into the mountains, early introductions to the family business, cameras, power tools, allowances to be managed, elderly caretakers, and even opportunities for volunteer service for their children. I am merely suggesting we recognize these objectives as having value for all adolescents, and incorporate the necessary activities into our overall developmental scheme.

Finally, and critically, these objectives, by and large, cannot be achieved in any significant way by jobs and activities currently available in the private sector. Profit making has much to do with maximizing production, competitiveness, standardizing output, and reducing labor cost. The eight objectives listed above are mostly antithetical to these principles. Rather, they have to do with intense human interaction, creativity, experimentation, cooperation, compassion, exploration, and love. We have no reason to expect some invisible hand to guide us to profit-making ventures that have the latter potentials. Thus, the notion that the adolescent problem can be solved by building bridges between the school house and the business community is simply not true. The capitalistic system has demonstrated marvelous capabilities, but the opportunity to achieve the eight objectives cited above are not among them.

In short, neither the school with its lessons, courses, and curricula nor the business world with its time and motion studies and rational divisions of labor are viable environments in which to help young people become all that is in them to become.

"We have met the enemy and he is us," claims Pogo, and so goes education. For so many decades we have considered jobs and schooling as the only variables to be balanced in the development of adolescents that we are blinded to the potential now available. Scientific advancement has negated much of the need for human energy, and our social policies have resulted in much of that energy release occurring for young adults. Our response to the resultant prolonging of adolescence has simply been the extension of formal schooling, on the unexamined assumption that more of a good thing must be better. It appears that we have now run afoul of the law of diminishing returns. Rather than turning our efforts to calculating better strategies to control schools, perhaps we ought to perceive this extension of economically unproductive time for adolescents as an opportunity to develop experiences designed solely to create better people. We already do that, of course, but in random ways, mostly for the wealthier, and usually with stated intents that disguise the personal growth benefits of the participants. Many local, state, and Federal programs, using volunteers and interns, designed to help undeveloped countries, uneducated people, poor people, slower students, older people, and so on, probably have as much positive impact on the young adult volunteers and interns as on the so-called target population. My hunch is that we can drastically increase the effectiveness of such

programs by recognizing their dual impact and by making them a formal part of our total educational program.

This direction is not new of course. Rolf Muuss (1975), for one, has written:

> In order to establish a personal identity, the adolescent needs time, experiences, and relationships with others that do not "count". Both Mead and Erikson speak of youth's need for a "psychological moratorium" in which the individual can experiment freely with his own identity, with his relationships with other people, and with ideas without having to commit himself. He "plays the field" not only in relationship to the opposite sex but exploring his commitments to life in general. However, the social pressure for success, for good grades, for promotion, for another Boy Scout badge, and later for the right college and the right degree make it increasingly more difficult "to play the field."...
>
> The commitment to a Peace Corps experience seems to imply a desire for a "psychological moratorium" par excellence. It provides youth with an opportunity to leave the Establishment, the family, the school, the college, and the competitive market place in order to find one's self. In contrast to the psychological benefits, the financial rewards are unattractive and the experience does not yield credits, a diploma, or a degree. However, it provides opportunities to explore one's own values and one's relationships with others; it provides a new environment, even a new cultural setting. There seems to be an analogy to the preindustrial European journeyman who left his hometown and frequently his country in order to practice his trade and explore the world before returning with new perspectives and settling in a more traditional pattern of life. (pp. 257-258)
>
> The term "moratorium," in a general sense is a period of delay granted to somebody who is not yet ready to meet an obligation or make a commitment (Erikson, 1968: 157). The adolescent moratorium is defined as a developmental

> period during which commitments have not yet been made or are rather exploratory and tentative. However, there are many crises and many unresolved questions. There is an active struggle to find an answer, explore, search, experiment, try out different roles, and play the field. It is in this sense that the moratorium is considered the adolescent issue par excellence. (p. 77)

What I am proposing falls into the moratorium category in the sense that the activities I am suggesting deviate from the schooling/job route. These activities are not designed as preparation for more schooling nor are they designed for learning career or job skills. (Of course, meaningful experiences will help prepare students for both, since whatever broadens and deepens a person will be integrated in all experiences that follow, including schooling and career.) The primary purpose, however, is to design activities that will enable young people to become more self-confident, more insightful about the inequities of our system, and more open to experience and to each other; to help them formulate problems that are of current importance in their own lives; to guide them in attacking those problems; and to help them reach conclusions on a more stable basis than before--and, in so doing, to help them to discover and create who they are.

A Beginning

The following twelve activities are not intended as models ready for implementation. Rather, they are presented as samples of the kind of activities that embody the objectives listed

earlier. Just how they would be organized and administered would be a function of local conditions.

(1) Ecological projects. Every city, town, and crossroads has felt the impact of commercialism run amok. Need we spend much time listing the rivers, parks, fields, woods, ponds, and mountains that are in need of cleansing?

(2) Aesthetic projects. We have badly neglected the opportunity to beautify our nation as we harvested, all too often wantonly, its resources. We now have the funds and the youth power to step back a moment from our productive pursuits to pay due attention to beautification.

(3) Cultural events. Fifty students, say, could take six months off to produce two or three plays. They could make the props, play the parts, and perhaps even write the scripts. The same idea could be applied to music, dance, flower shows, art, etc. Local radio and TV stations, as well as local stage facilities, could be used.

(4) News reporting. What town wouldn't gain by having a TV channel, radio station or newspaper operated by a group of adolescents? The intent would not be, of course, to compete with commercial producers, but to augment them by offering another perspective.

(5) Laboratory projects. We could set up laboratories where inquisitive young scientists could experiment with ideas that interest them.

(6) Human services. There is much evidence that, in this

communication-blitzed nation, many people are suffering acute loneliness. Through the systematic segregation of the young, the ill, and the old, we have placed artificial barriers between people who are much in need of one another. Elderly people need the young, and the very young need the adolescents, and the ill and depressed need the healthy and the spirited. Compassionate and thoughtful people could readily devise schemes for bringing these now-separated groups together for extended periods of time.

(7) Arts and crafts. We need but provide space, materials, and legitimacy to get adolescents to spend endless hours working (in the best sense of the word) with wood, metals, leather, plastics, glass, rock, etc.

(8) Construction. There is much need for building projects that our profit-oriented economy does not deliver. Children need playgrounds; the elderly need rooms remodeled. What better mixture of people and materials than a crew of six girls and boys between 12 and 19 years old or so helping an elderly couple turn an attic into a greenhouse?

(9) Skill development. Adolescents crave mastery. What better way to spend the year from, say, 15 1/2 to 16 1/2 than learning electronics, or stereo repair, or carpentry, or small engine repair, or cookery, or cattle raising, or bike repair, or photography? Such skill-oriented programs would have as their aim the growth and development of the young people involved, filling social, spiritual, and aesthetic needs as

well as technical ones.

(10) Academic sabbatical. One of the sheer joys of the academic profession is the sabbatical, an adult moratorium designed to enable and even encourage people to lose themselves in some self-selected project. We can readily extend that concept to young scholars who might want to spend six months studying Black history, feminism, sailing, astronomy, or whatever.

(11) Travel. The potential for enabling young people to spend several months in other towns, states, and countries is virtually unlimited. Why should a year abroad be restricted to the independently wealthy?

(12) Operating a business. There are already projects all over the country in which young people organize and operate a business. This would provide the kind of experiences needed by so many of our young who currently spend incalcuable amounts of intelligence and energy in ripping off other people's businesses.

These twelve ideas are almost randomly selected. Any normal benevolent adult could quadruple the list in a matter of minutes. Once we extend our thinking beyond formal schooling and jobs as the only two appropriate options for young adults,

we get a veritable galaxy of creative opportunities. Which ones are the best for a given group of young people at a given time is a function of local conditions. We cannot and should not structure those adventures in advance.

The Practical Problems

Almost any competent school board member or school administrator could give five reasons why each of these twelve ideas is "inoperable"--parents' resistance, lack of funds, Federal and state laws, unions, student immaturity, college requirements, and so on. In 1960, most people had five reasons why we could never get to the moon.

I do not mean to belittle the difficulties inherent in introducing a concept like a sabbatical or moratorium for a 15-year-old. But prolonged adolescence is a social invention, not a physiological fact, and we can alter social instituions to make these programs possible. Certainly, there will be problems involving issues of money, time, school, the private sector, and other institutions. A word on each may be in order.

Funds. Obtaining public funds for education is hard and getting harder. But, as Paul Goodman pointed out years ago, the kind of projects mentioned above can easily be funded for the same dollars we now spend to keep youngsters in school. Besides, given the cost of vandalism and the money spent on

moon shots, it seems shameful to suggest we can't afford programs for our young.

Time. Many of the projects suggested are now available in the public schools. Yet, they do not serve the same ends. There is a vast difference between spending six months in a metal craftshop eight hours a day working with other craftspeople of different ages and sexes and attending metal shop in a public school for 47 minutes each day with one's peers.

How much concentrated time should be provided for each of these projects is relative to local conditions. Some projects may take six months; others, a year or more.

School. The regular school, of course, would go on as before. These "sabbatical" projects would be available, and students would move in and out of them as they seek an appropriate balance of academics, jobs, and sabbatical experiences. In no way do I wish to demean the academic portion of education; on the contrary, I mean to enrich it, deepen it, broaden it, and make it available over longer periods of time.

The Private Sector. Many will argue, and have argued, that such projects would compete with the profit-seeking sector of our economy. Others have argued that all these objectives can better be achieved by cooperation with the business community (Wirtz, 1975; Coleman et al., 1974). With the first argument I concur: they would, and our already mixed economic system would become somewhat more mixed--but not awesomely so. The second argument appears to me wrongheaded.

The objectives of a profit-seeking enterprise are so different from the objectives of an adolescent-development project that I don't think cooperation is possible. Perhaps later, in a more enlightened phase of our capitalistic experiment, our humanistic needs and our productive needs will mesh. But at the moment they clash, and we cannot delay the creation of better options for our young.

Other Institutions. Clearly one of the joys of initiating these projects is that in most cases they involve an interaction with an institution badly in need of the involvement. This mutual advantage is, of course, what makes the projects so attractive. While adolescents need to be models for the younger children, the younger children need adolescent models. While adolescents need the wisdom and understanding of the aged, the aged need to give wisdom and understanding. While adolescents need to clean rivers and mountains, rivers and mountains need cleansing. While adolescents need to build, refurbish, and paint, there is much that needs to be built, refurbished, and painted.

In a way, all that a local educator needs to do to develop a worthwhile project is to look around the local community to see how people's lives could be better and then find a way to tie that need to the energy, compassion, native intelligence, creativity, and love of our young adults.

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